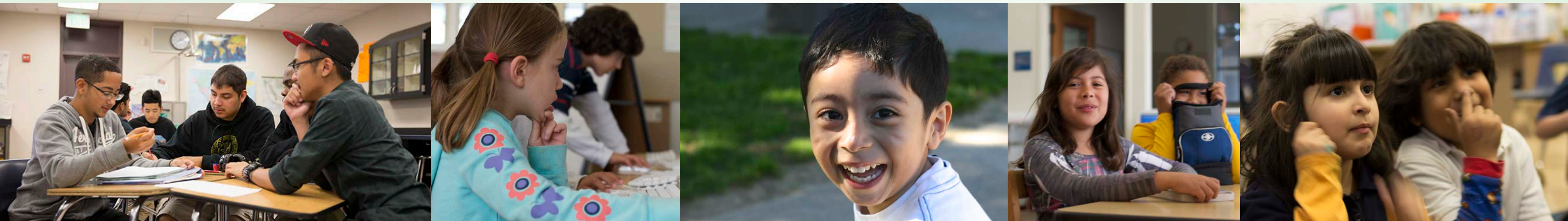


# Using Attendance Data for Decisionmaking: Strategies for State and Local Education Agencies



# Goals for today's webinar

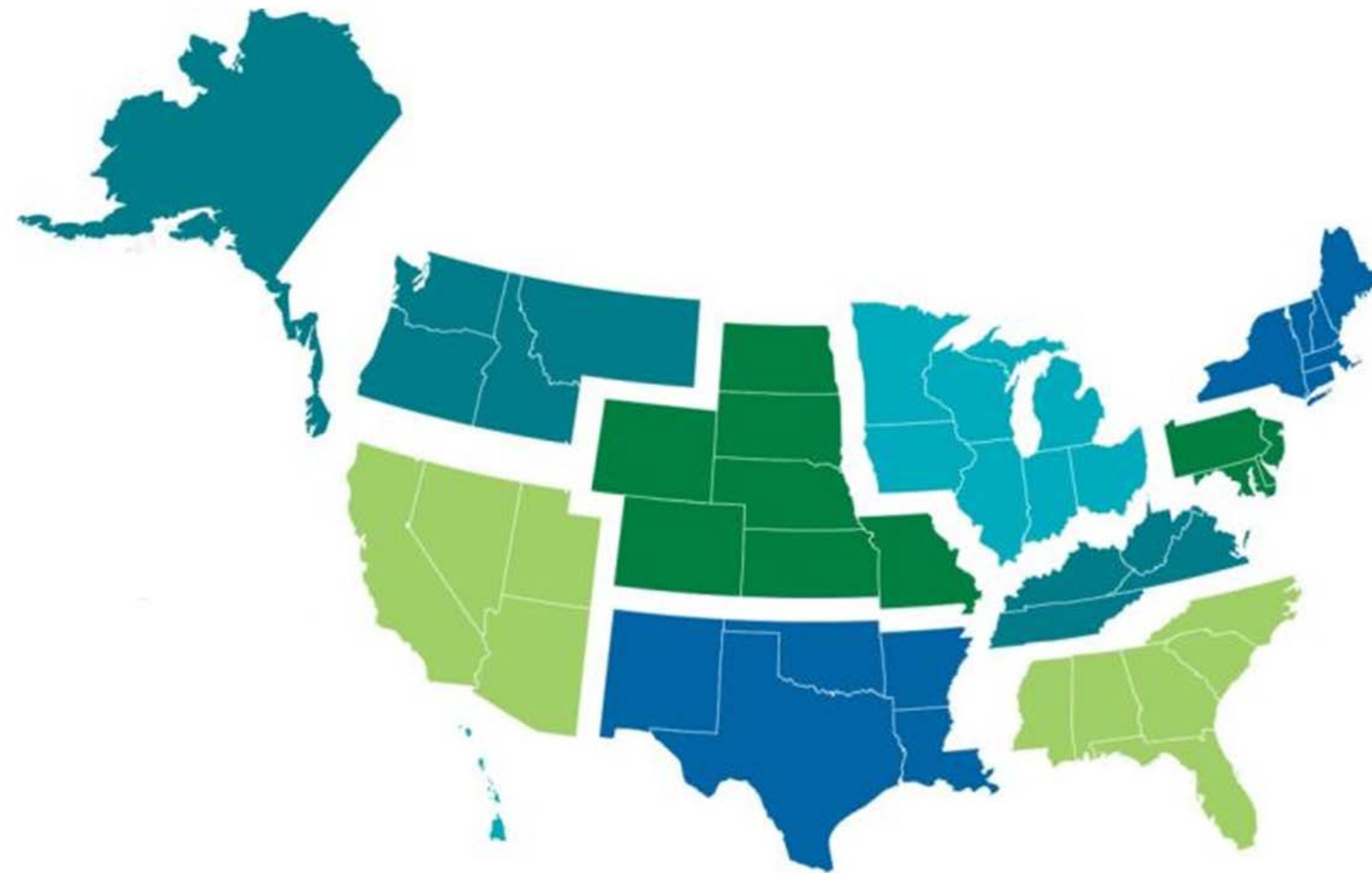
- Learn about how attendance data, when examined effectively, can drive decisionmaking to support chronically absent students
- Be introduced to (or revisit) an inquiry process for examining attendance data that can uncover absence trends and help teams build shared understanding and consensus for problem solving
- Hear about actions other districts have taken as a result of effectively collecting and understanding attendance data

# Agenda

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| 11:30 am | Introductions & framing the topic                                |
| 11:40 am | The Attendance Works approach and strategies for systemic change |
| 12:00 pm | Lessons learned from Metro Nashville Public Schools              |
| 12:20 pm | Making connections (audience Q&A)                                |
| 12:30 pm | Closing & surveys  |

# About REL West

- 10 regions
- Bridging research, policy, and practice
- Funded by the Institute for Education Sciences (IES)

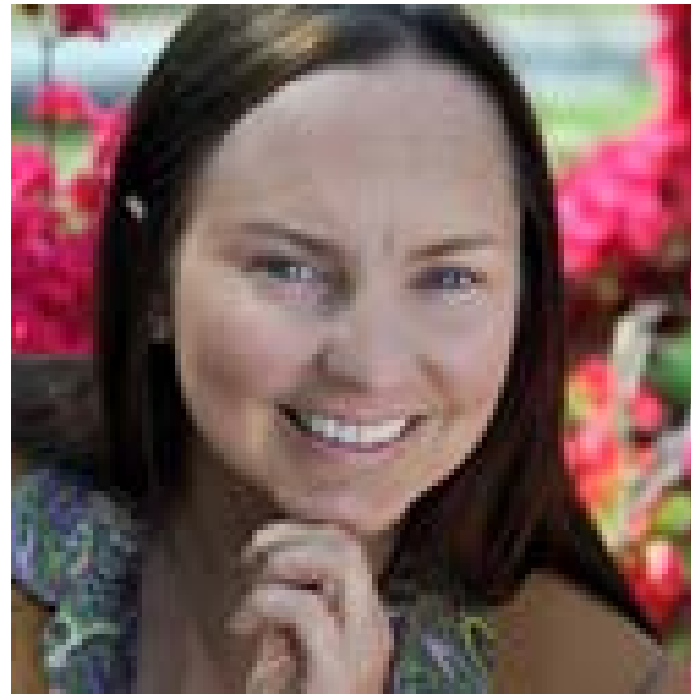




# Speakers



Kenwyn Derby  
*REL West at WestEd*



Sue Fothergill  
*Attendance Works*



Laura Hansen  
*Metro Nashville  
Public Schools*

# Chronic Absence: A brief introduction

- Measure of learning time a student misses – for ANY reason
- No set definition, but generally accepted threshold: absent 10% of school days
- Amount of school missed that significantly negatively impacts a student's education

## Today's key topics:

- Challenge and importance of achieving data reliability
- Value of digging deep into WHY students are missing school
- Importance of engaging multiple stakeholders in data review, decisionmaking, and implementation

# The Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Attendance Data

- Purpose: to help education agencies collect, report, and use attendance data to improve student and school outcomes
- Emphasizes value of accurate data collection and management
- Incorporates current best practices, real-world examples, and role-specific tip sheets.

National Forum on Education Statistics: <https://nces.ed.gov/forum>

Guide: <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=NFES2017007>



# The Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Attendance Data


- Why attendance matters and its relationship with student achievement and success
- Importance of high quality attendance data and using an attendance taxonomy
  - provides an exhaustive, mutually exclusive attendance taxonomy (16 categories)
  - suggests a standard attendance taxonomy that comparability between schools, districts, and states (but flexible enough to allow mapping existing codes to its categories)
- Common challenges and effective practices related to collecting, reporting, and using quality attendance data



# The Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Attendance Data

Tip sheets: Role-based questions to answer and actions that staff can take to improve the collection and use of high-quality attendance data (6 stakeholder categories)

- Responsibilities
- Things to think about
- Things to do
- Outcomes/Benefits



## LEA Tip Sheet – Teachers

### Responsibilities

Teachers are typically the first staff to know when students are not present in class, and are often the first to report student absences. Your responsibilities may include the following:

- Promoting student safety by reporting accurate attendance data in a timely manner
- Updating attendance data as needed (such as when students are tardy) and working with office staff to ensure that correct attendance data are entered into the system
- Monitoring attendance data to determine whether there are patterns in the absences of students enrolled in your classes
- Contacting families when attendance issues arise, and subsequently making referrals to social workers, family community specialists, and counselors when there are concerns about attendance related to home situations

### Things to Think About

- How can you improve student engagement in your class to encourage student attendance?
- How can you improve your relationships with students to encourage attendance?
- How can you reach out to students and their families who are struggling with attendance? What types of assistance and support are available to help these students?
- When and how are teachers in your school expected to refer students experiencing attendance issues to school attendance staff?

### Things to Do

- Thoroughly understand the processes necessary to accurately report attendance data for your classroom.
- Obtain proper training on ensuring quality attendance data in your system.
- Refrain from reporting qualitative judgments on the reasons for student absences.
- Participate in student interventions by contacting families to discuss attendance.

### Outcomes (What's In It for Me?)

- Research indicates that consistent attendance has a direct impact on academic performance.<sup>12</sup>
- Accurate and timely attendance reporting will assist your school in complying with overall LEA requirements.
- Better relationships will mean better attendance for your students.
- By ensuring that data are recorded accurately and in a timely way, you will help support students' success.
- By better understanding the reasons for student attendance and absences, you will have a better understanding of students' personal situations and safety.

### Teachers and Attendance

Teachers are often the first staff to record attendance data, but other school staff may need to add information to the record to complete the attendance data collection process. Teacher attendance data tallies are often limited to marking students as "present" or "absent," based on whether students are in attendance when the teacher records attendance. For example, a teacher in a physical classroom would mark a student who is not physically present as "absent," even if the teacher is aware of the reason for the absence. After classroom attendance data are submitted to the central office, staff responsible for maintaining attendance records may note the reason for the absence, and whether the absence is excused or unexcused. This additional information provides more accurate and detailed attendance data.

<sup>12</sup> The References list at the end of this guide contains selected research on student attendance.

Chapter 8: Acting on the Data - Tip Sheets for SEA and LEA Stakeholders  
LEA Tip Sheet - Teachers

33



# Reducing Chronic Absence

Why does it matter? What can we do?





## About Us

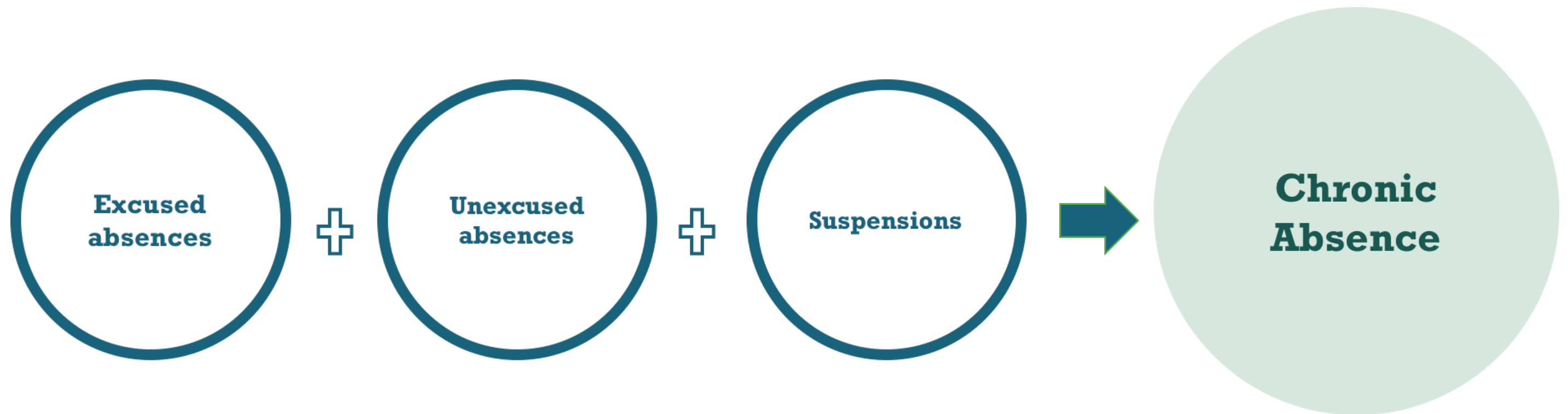
**Attendance Works** advances student success and closes equity gaps by reducing chronic absence. Operating at the local, state, and national level, Attendance Works:

- Advances better **policy**
- Nurtures proven and promising **practice**
- Promotes meaningful and effective **communication**
- Catalyzing needed **research**



## What is Chronic Absence?

**Chronic absence** is missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at risk. Attendance Works recommends defining it as **missing 10% or more of school for any reason.**



Chronic absence is different from **truancy** (unexcused absences only) or **average daily attendance** (how many students show up to school each day).





## **ED Facts Definition of Chronic Absence (EdFacts Chronic Absenteeism File Specifications SY2016-17)**

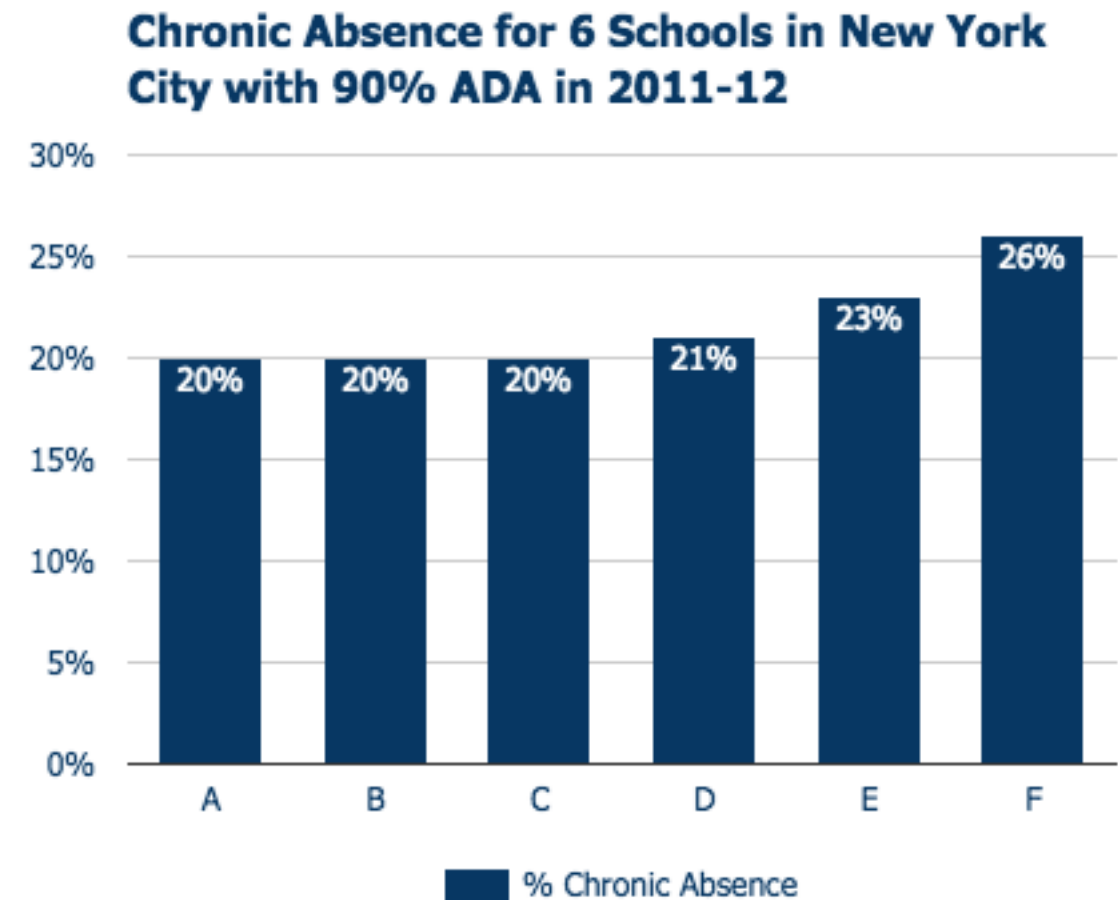
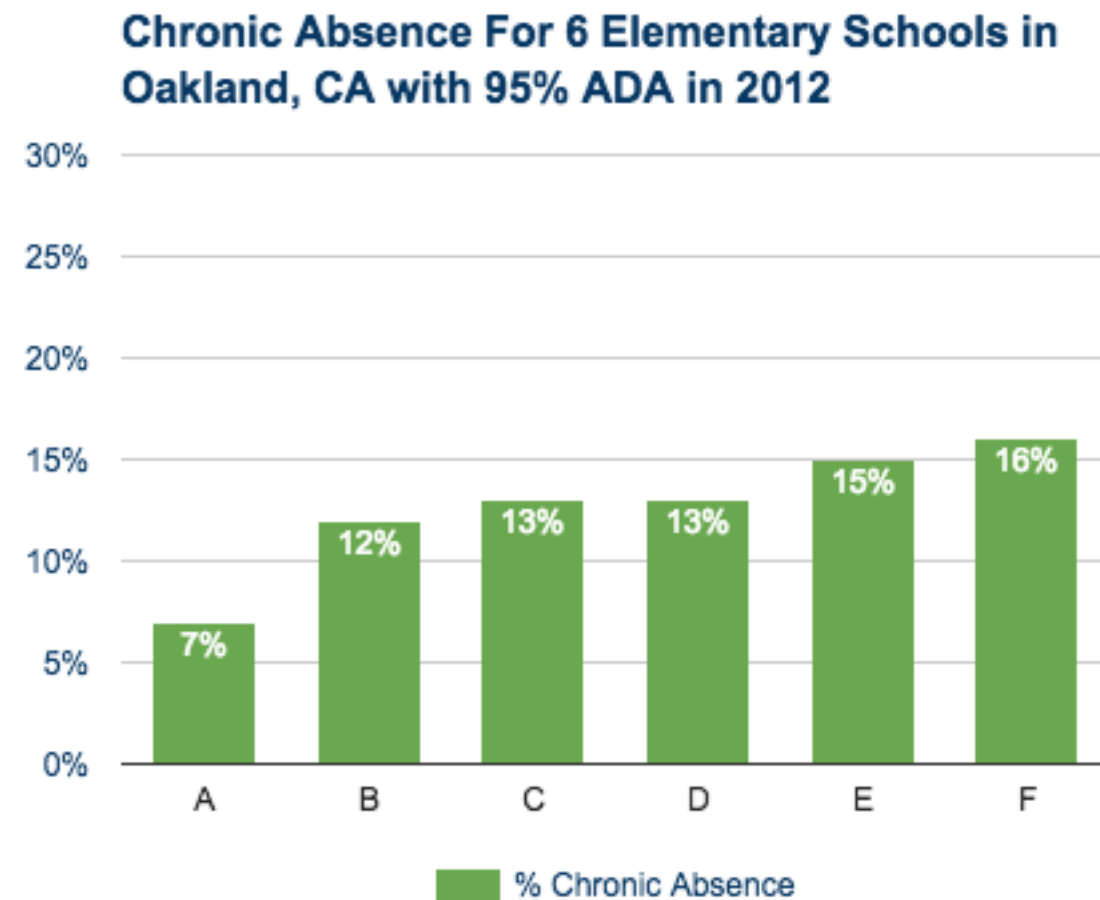
The unduplicated number of students absent 10% or more school days during the school year.

- Include all students grade kindergarten – 12<sup>th</sup> grade who meet the definition of chronic absenteeism
- Include students who were enrolled for at least 10 school days at anytime during the school year, and who missed 10% of the school days in which they were enrolled in the school
- Students should be counted once at each school he/she attended
- A student is considered tardy if they are absent for less than 50% of the school day

Definition of Absenteeism – a student is absent if he or she is not physically on school grounds and is not participating in instruction or instruction-related activities at an approved off-ground location for the school day. Chronically absent students include students who are absent for any reason (e.g., illness, suspension, the need to care for a family member), regardless of whether absences are excused or unexcused.



## Average Daily Attendance (ADA) Can Mask Chronic Absence

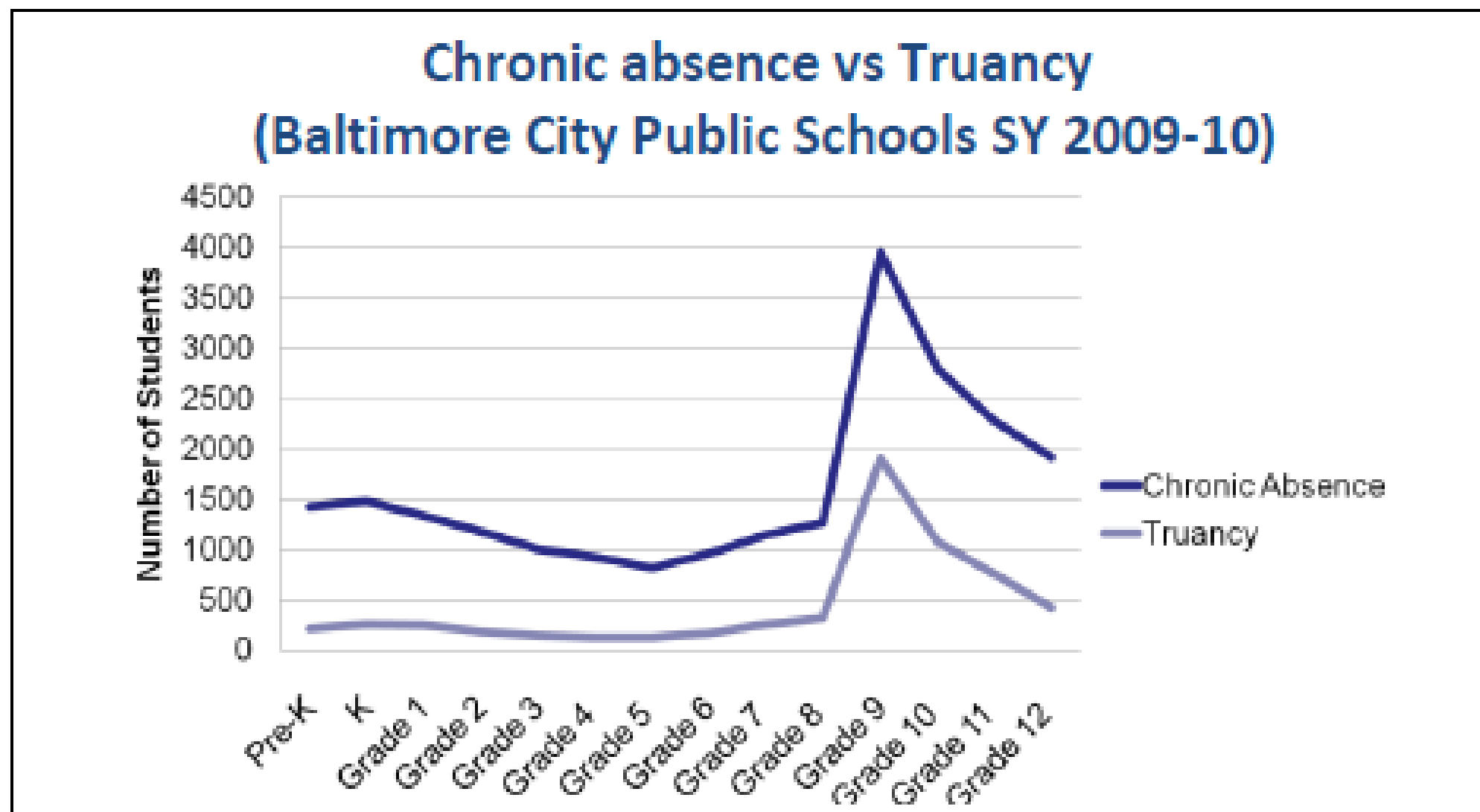


**90% and even 95%  $\neq$  A**

98% ADA = little chronic absence  
95% ADA = don't know  
93% ADA = significant chronic absence



## Truancy (unexcused absences) Can Underestimate Chronic Absence



Note: MD defines truancy as missing 20% of the school year.



# Student Attendance is Strongly Associated with Academic Success

**K-1st Grade:** Students who attend regularly in the early grades perform better on measures of academic and social and emotional capacities.

**3rd Grade:** Students who attend school regularly are more likely to be able to read proficiently by the end of 3rd grade.

**Middle School Success:** Students who attend school regularly are more likely to have passing grades in middle school

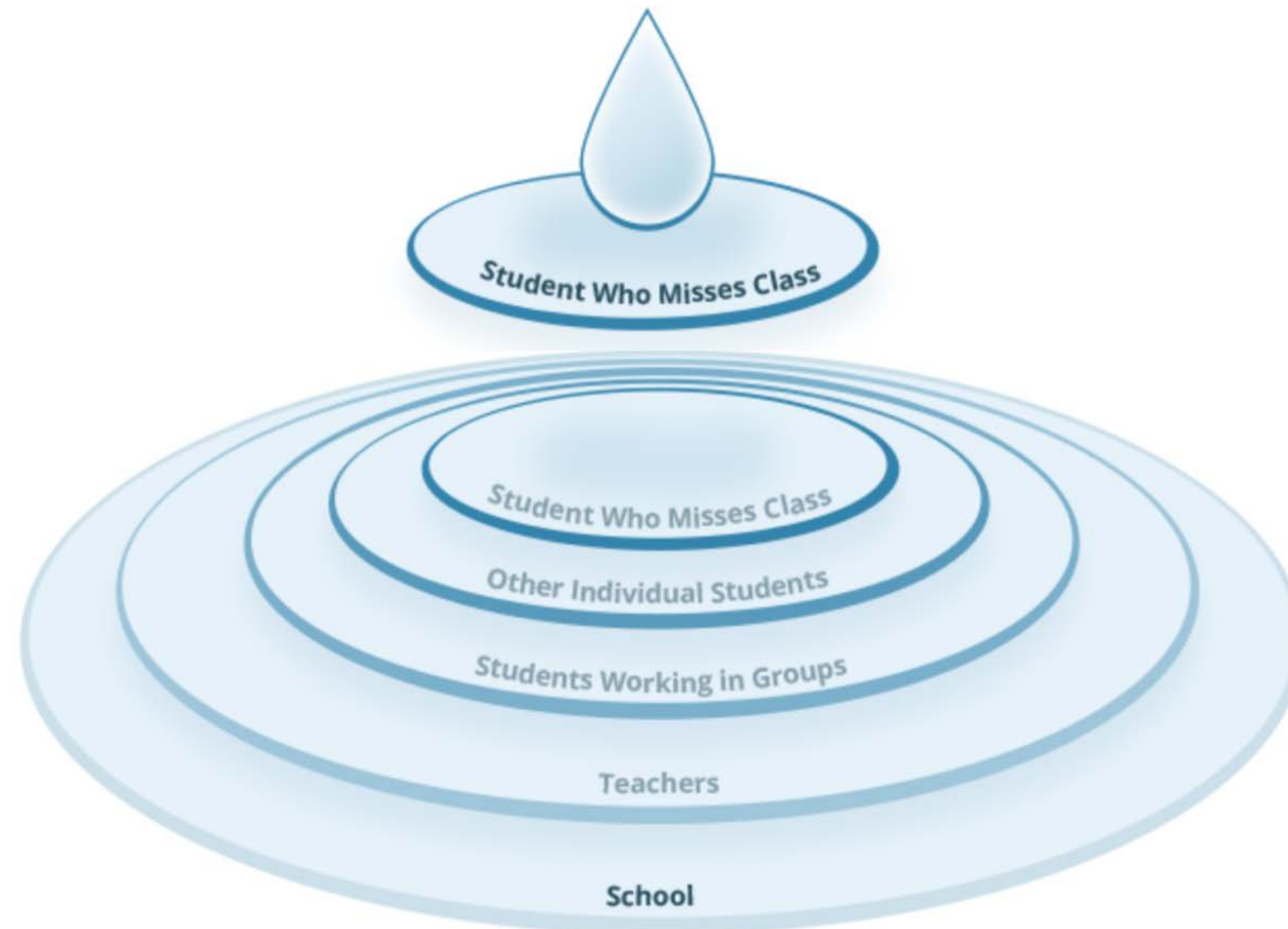
**High School Completion:** Students who attend school regularly are more likely to graduate from high school

**College Completion:** Students who attend school regularly in high school are more likely to persist in college and graduate





## When a Student Misses School the Impact Ripples





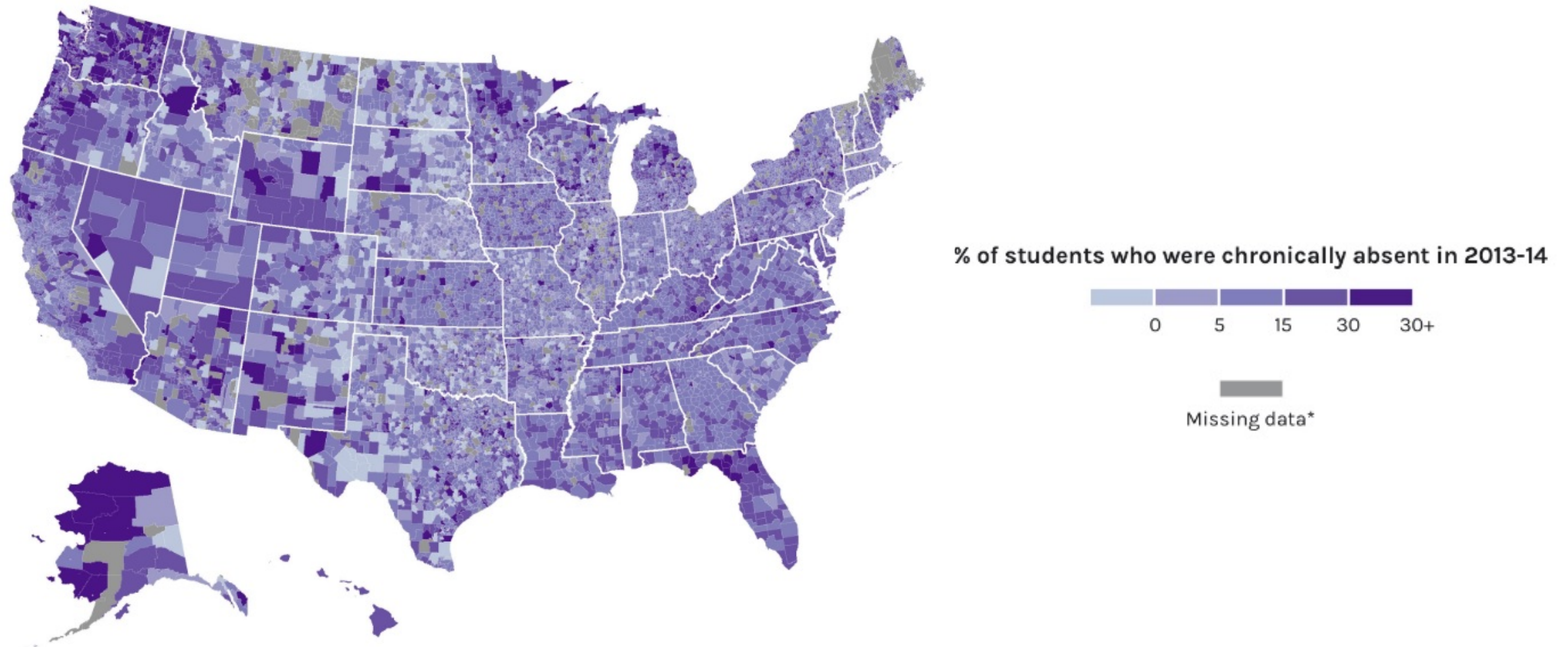
## Chronic Absence is Easily Masked if We Only Monitor Missing Consecutive days

September					October					November					December					January					
M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	
													X				X								
							X				X														
		X	X					X				X			X	X					X	X	X		

February					March					April					May					June				
M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F
				X						X														
X	X													X		X					X	X		
								X					X											

Chronic Absence = 18 days of absence = **As few as 2 days a month**

**Over 7 million students were reported chronically absent in the 2013–14 School Year**



Source: U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection SY 2013-14  
<https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/chronicabsenteeism.html>



## Chronic Absence Checks All of the Boxes as a Measure of School Quality and Student Success

ESSA: States must establish a measure of school quality or student success	Chronic Absence
Valid	✓
Reliable	✓
Calculated the same for all schools and school districts across the state	✓
Can be disaggregated by student sub-population	✓
Is a proven indicator of school quality	✓
Is a proven indicator of student success	✓

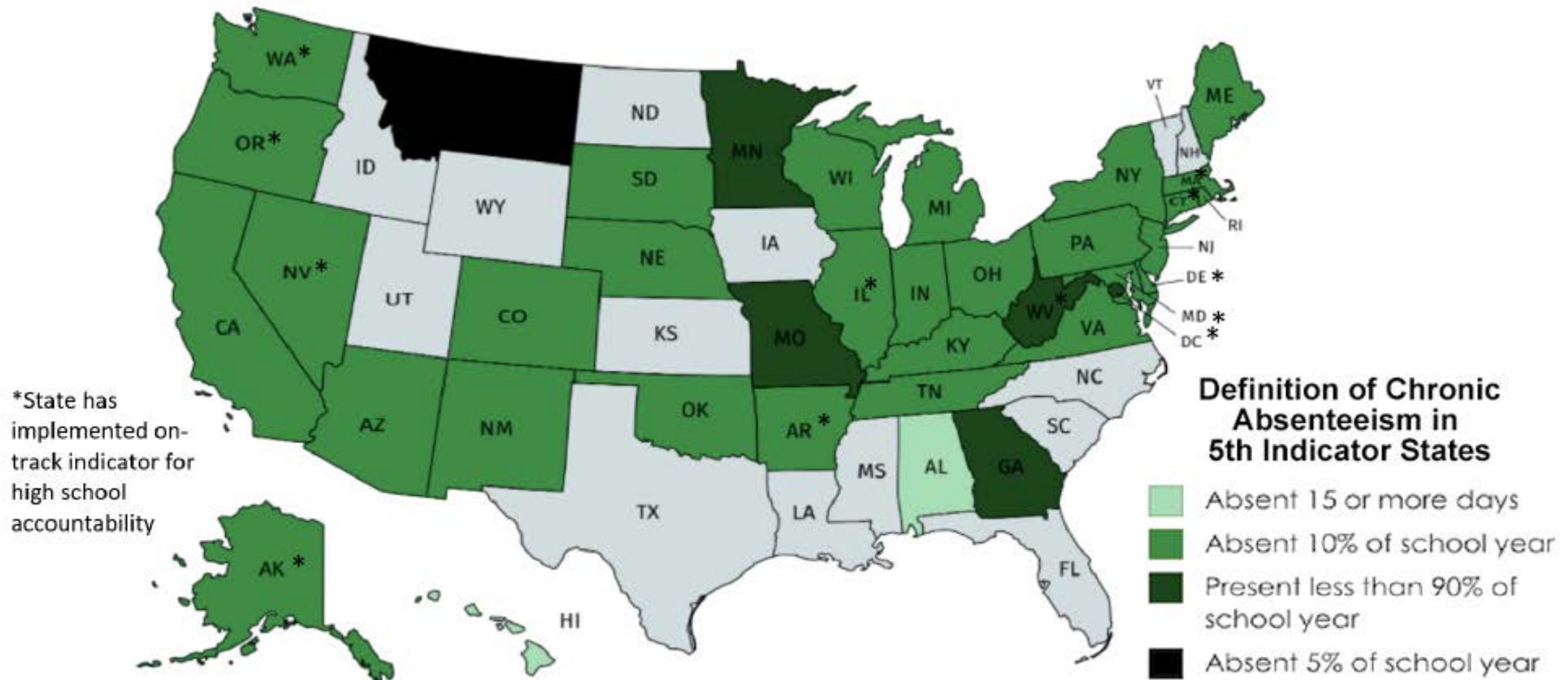
**Validity** — the degree to which an indicator actually measures what you are trying to measure.

**Reliability** — the degree to which you will get the same answer when you ask a question/compute a measure multiple times.

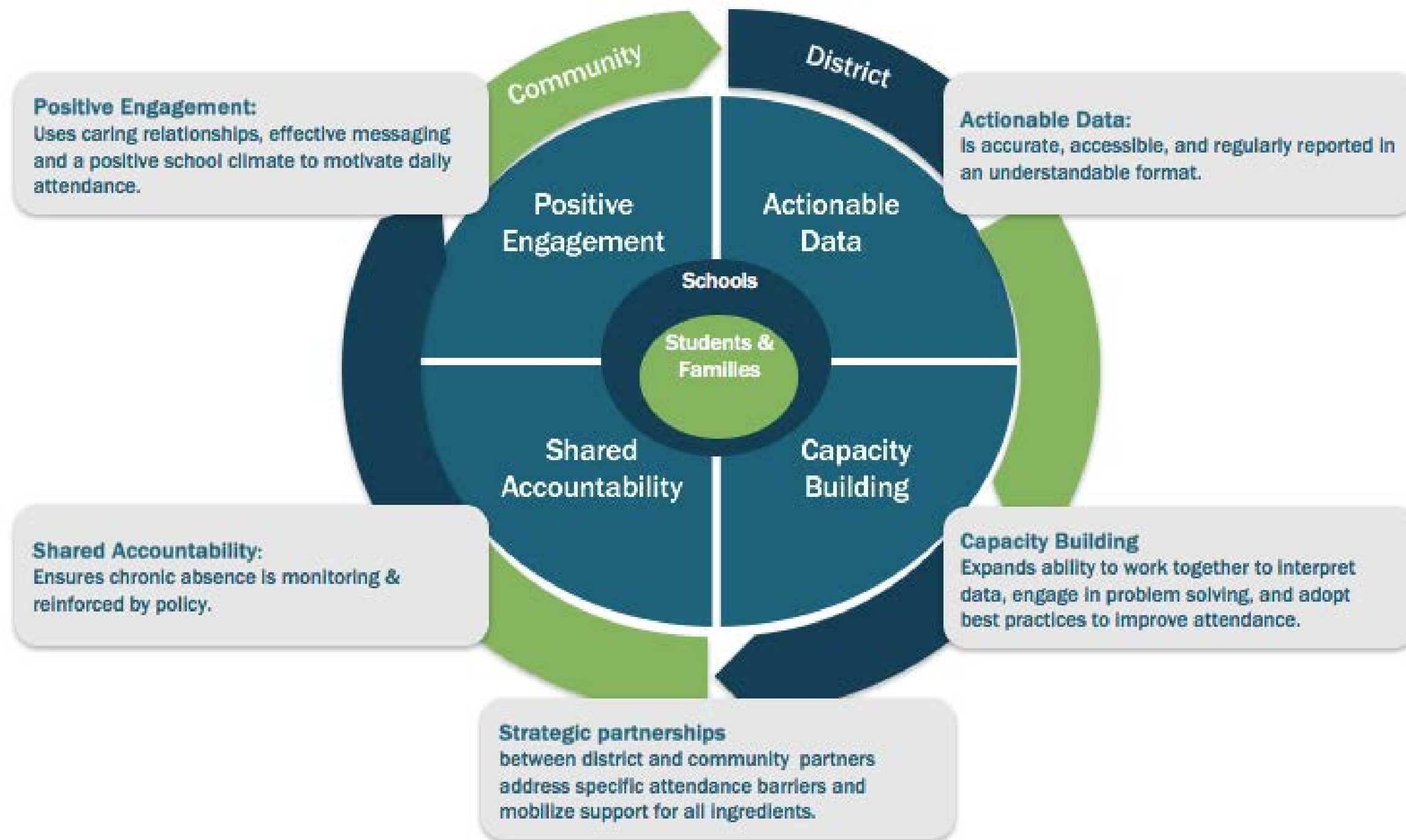
Additional benefit, chronic absence can serve as a proxy for school climate and student engagement.



## 36 States Adopted Some Measures of Absenteeism as Their Fifth Indicator of Student Success Under ESSA

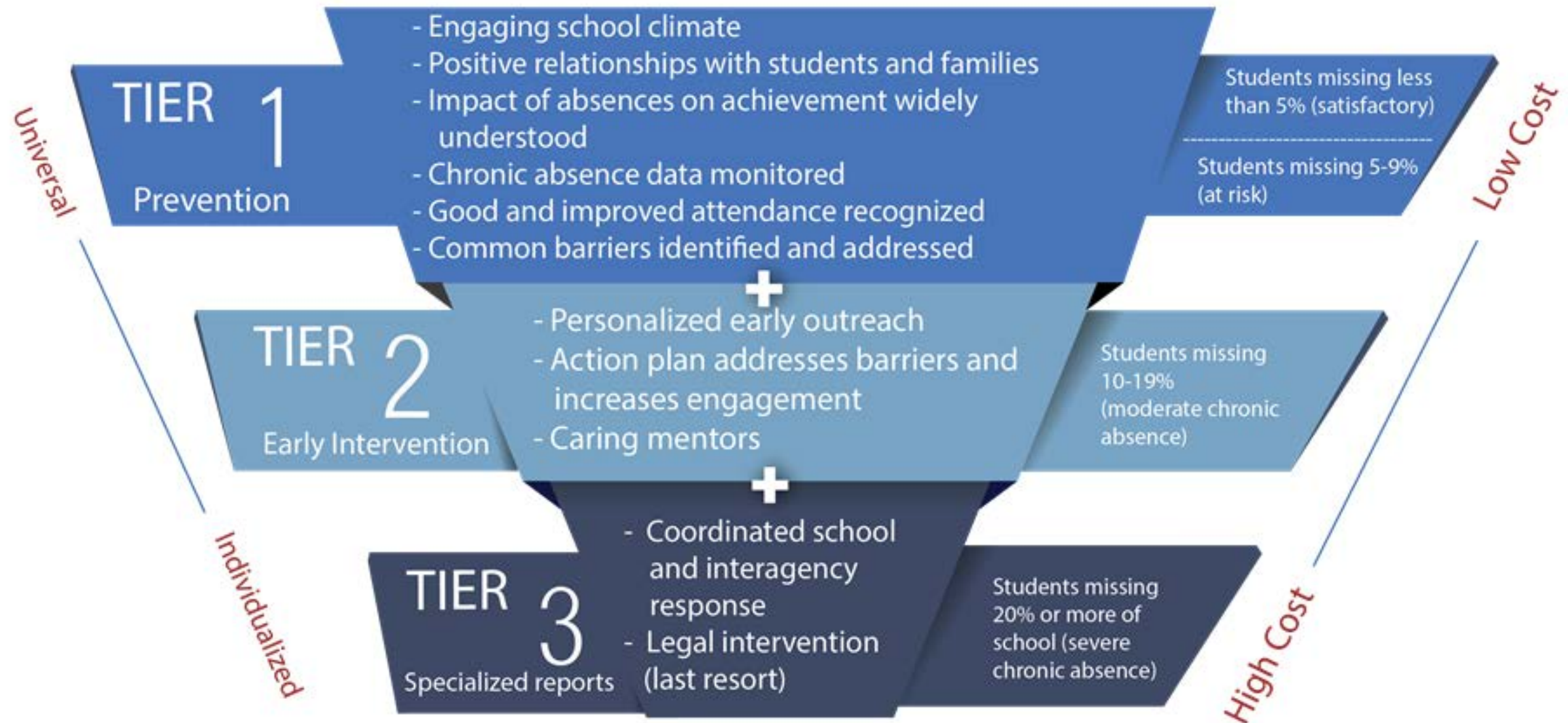


# Take a Data Driven Systemic Approach





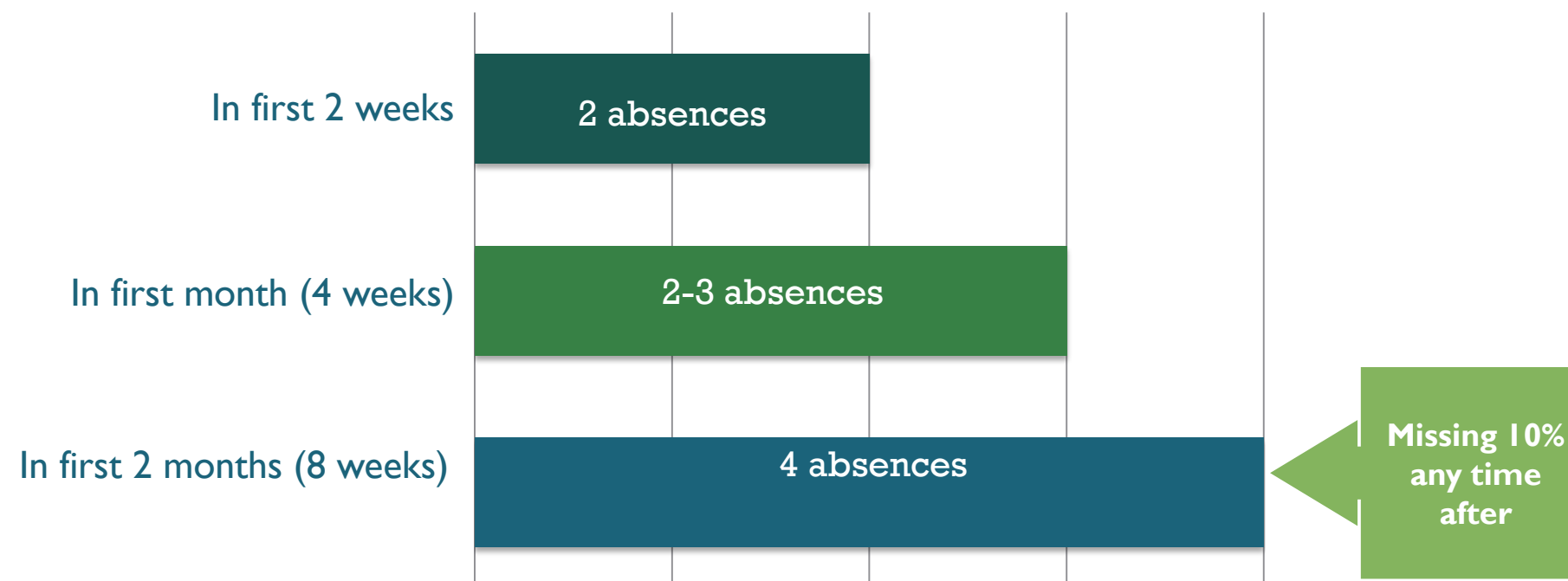
## Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention





## Criteria for Identifying Priority Students for Tier 2 Supports

- Chronic absence (missed 10% or more of school) in the prior year, assuming data is available.
- And/or starting in the beginning of the school year, student has:







## Factors That Contribute to Chronic Absence

### Barriers

- Illness, both chronic and acute
- Lack of health, mental health, vision, or dental care
- Trauma
- Unsafe path to/from school
- Poor transportation
- Frequent moves or school changes
- Involvement with child welfare or juvenile justice systems

### Negative School Experiences

- Struggling academically or socially
- Bullying
- Suspensions and expulsions
- Negative attitudes of parents due to their own school experience
- Undiagnosed disability
- Lack of appropriate accommodations for disability

### Lack of Engagement

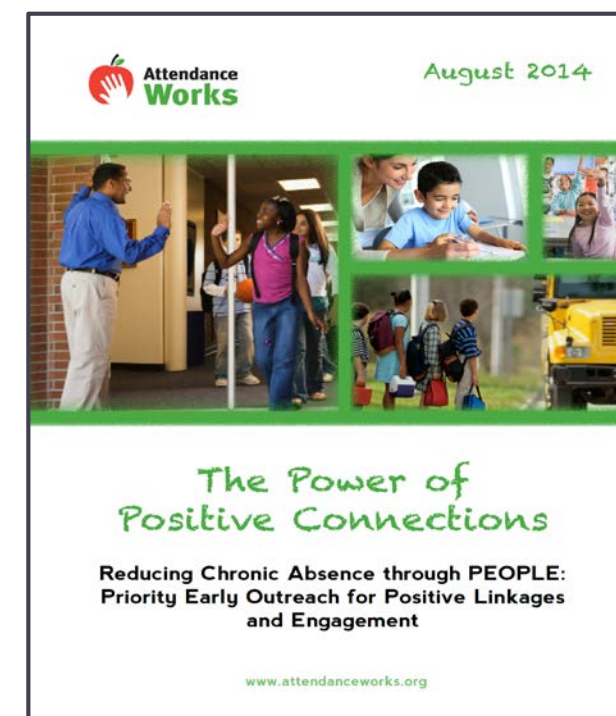
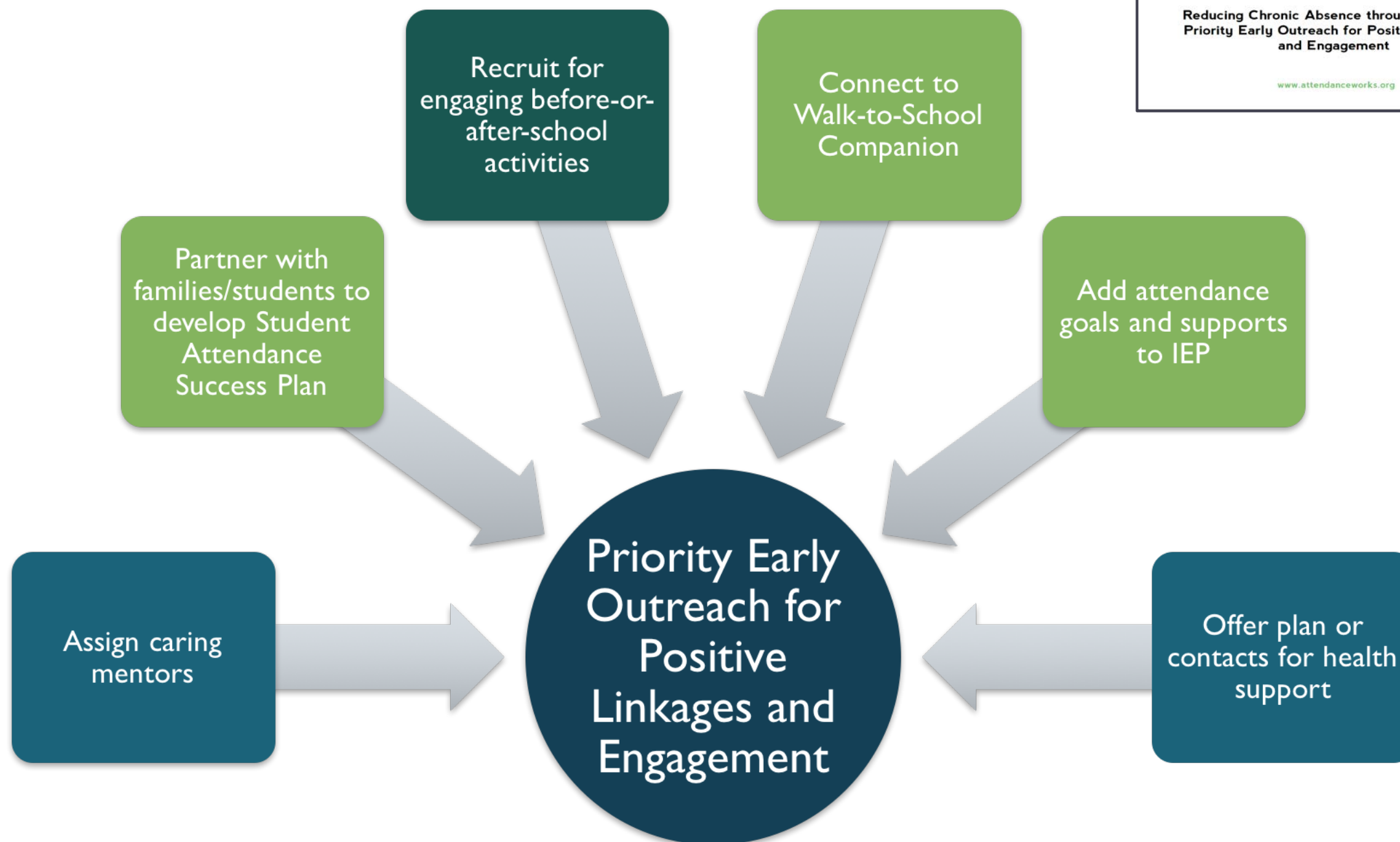
- Lack of culturally relevant, engaging instruction
- No meaningful relationships with adults in school
- Stronger ties with peers out of school than in school
- Unwelcoming school climate
- Failure to earn credits/ no future plans
- Many teacher absences or long-term substitutes

### Misconceptions

- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Missing 2 days per month doesn't affect learning
- Sporadic absences aren't a problem
- Attendance only matters in the older grades



## Possible Tier 2 Interventions





## Where to Start in Your District or School?

1. Gather a team
2. Access and examine absence data
3. Determine the scale and scope of absenteeism
4. Assess whether there are patterns to absences
  - Disaggregate grade level, demographics (gender, disability, English language learner status, poverty, and grade level)
  - Disaggregate data by geography and days or months



## What Tools are Available to Calculate Chronic Absence?

### FREE FROM ATTENDANCE WORKS!

- District Attendance Tracking Tools (**DATT**) and School Attendance Tracking Tools (**SATT**) analyzes absences across grades, schools, most sub-populations.
- Available in three modules (Grades PreK-5; Grades 6-8; Grades 9-12, plus tool to create K-12 report)
- Excel-based tool usable with most data systems.  
Go to: <http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/tools-for-calculating-chronic-absence/>

# Attendance Works' School Attendance Tracking Tools (SATT)

Severe chronic absence: Missing 20% or more of total school days  
Chronic absence: Missing 10-19.99% of total school days  
ALL chronic absence: Missing 10% or more school days (sums chronic + severe chronic)  
At-risk attendance: Missing 5-9.99% of total school days  
Satisfactory attendance: Missing less than 5% of total school days

GRADE	NUMBER severe chronic absence	PERCENT severe chronic absence	NUMBER chronic absence	PERCENT chronic absence	NUMBER ALL chronic absence (severe + chronic)	PERCENT ALL chronic absence (severe + chronic)	NUMBER at-risk attendance	PERCENT at-risk attendance	NUMBER satisfactory attendance	PERCENT Satisfactory Attendance	Total students
Grade K	0	0%	16	30%	16	30%	11	21%	26	49%	53
Grade 1	0	0%	15	19%	15	19%	23	29%	42	53%	80
Grade 2	1	1%	14	14%	15	15%	24	24%	60	61%	99
Grade 3	0	0%	4	7%	4	7%	19	32%	37	62%	60
Grade 4	4	6%	7	11%	11	17%	8	13%	44	70%	63
Grade 5	0	0%	10	15%	10	15%	19	29%	37	56%	66
Total- All Grades	5	1%	66	16%	71	17%	104	25%	246	58%	421



## Attendance Works

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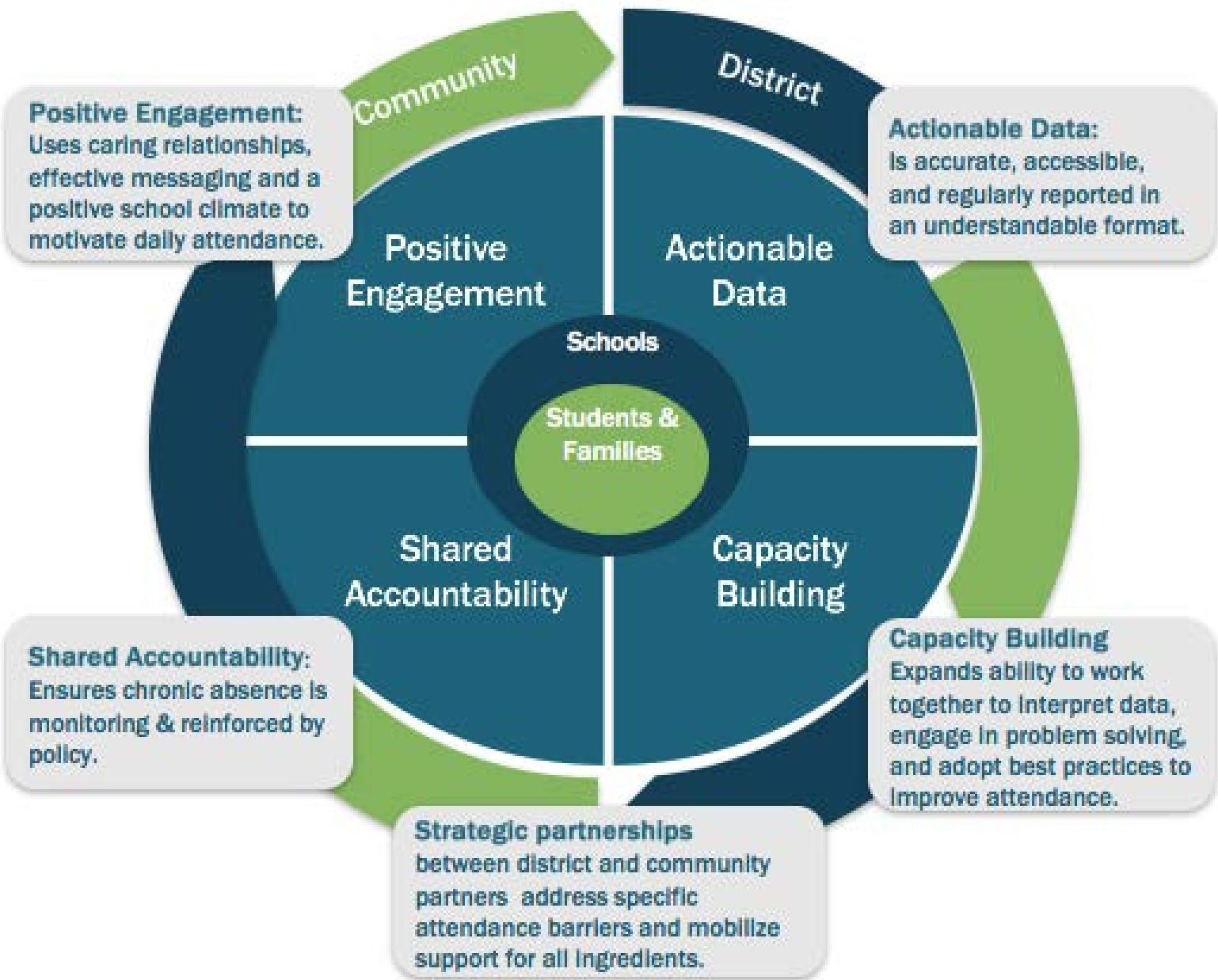
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# Take a Data Driven Systemic Approach



## METRO NASHVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS (MNPS) VISION

Metro Nashville Public Schools will be the fastest-improving urban school system in America, ensuring that every student becomes a life-long learner prepared for success in college, career and life.



### ABOUT US:

- 168 schools
- 42nd largest school system in US
- Over 500 square miles of geography covered
- Extremely diverse student population with more than 130 languages spoken by our families

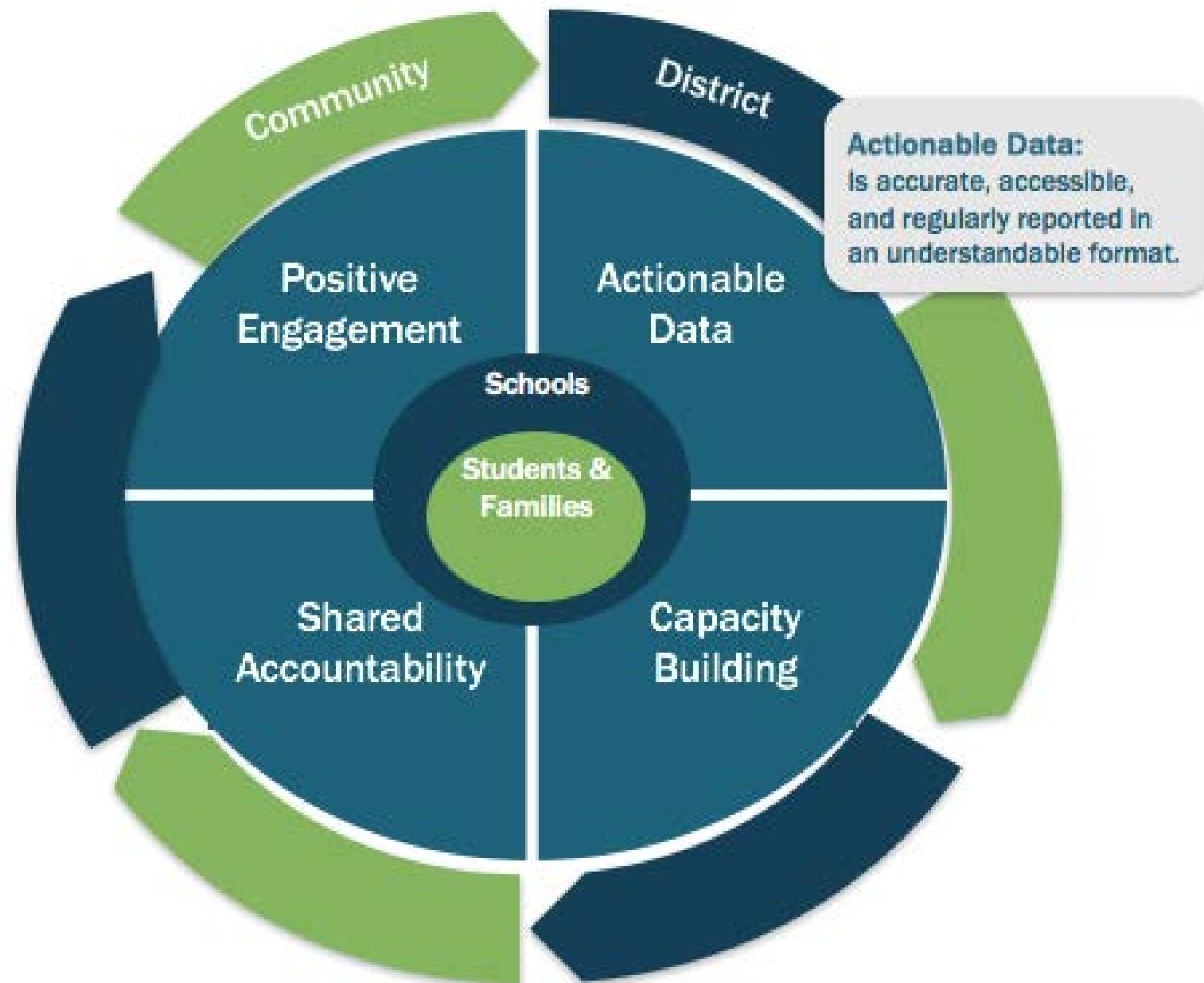
Students & Teachers: Davidson County, All Schools		
	Teachers	5,082
	Administrators	849
	Students	85,453
	English Learner Students	16,165
	English Learner Student Percent	18.9%
	Economically Disadvantaged Student Percent	50.6%
	Students with Disabilities	11,166
	Students with Disabilities Percent	13.1%
	Per-Pupil Expenditure	\$12,487.30

<https://www.tn.gov/education/data/report-card.html>

# Take a Data Driven Systemic Approach: Actionable Data



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## ACCURATE

- Defined processes and procedures (aligned with policy)
- Monitoring for data quality and integrity

## ACCESSIBLE

- Easy to navigate systems
- Bring data together (operational vs analytical)

## USABLE

- Reports designed for the stakeholders that use them (relevant)
- Reporting should be timely and actionable
- Answer relevant questions



16-17

All (District)

# Active Students (Primary): 86,325

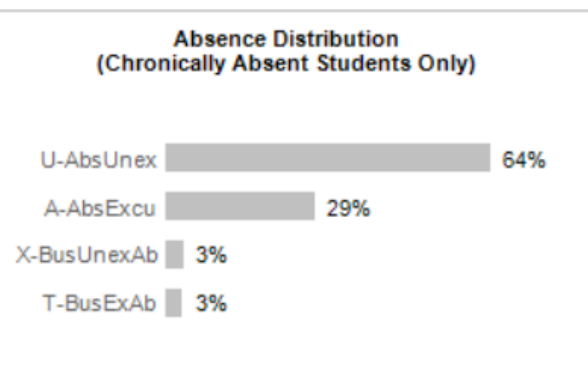
District Profile

Chronic Absence: Active students having absences (excused & unexcused) = 10% or more of all school days. Attendance counts are cumulative/year to date for primary enrollment schools.

District Summary	
Overall Attendance	94.0 %
Chronic Absence	16.9 %
Satisfactory (95+ % Present)	55.6 %
Perfect Attendance (100 % Present)	4.7 %

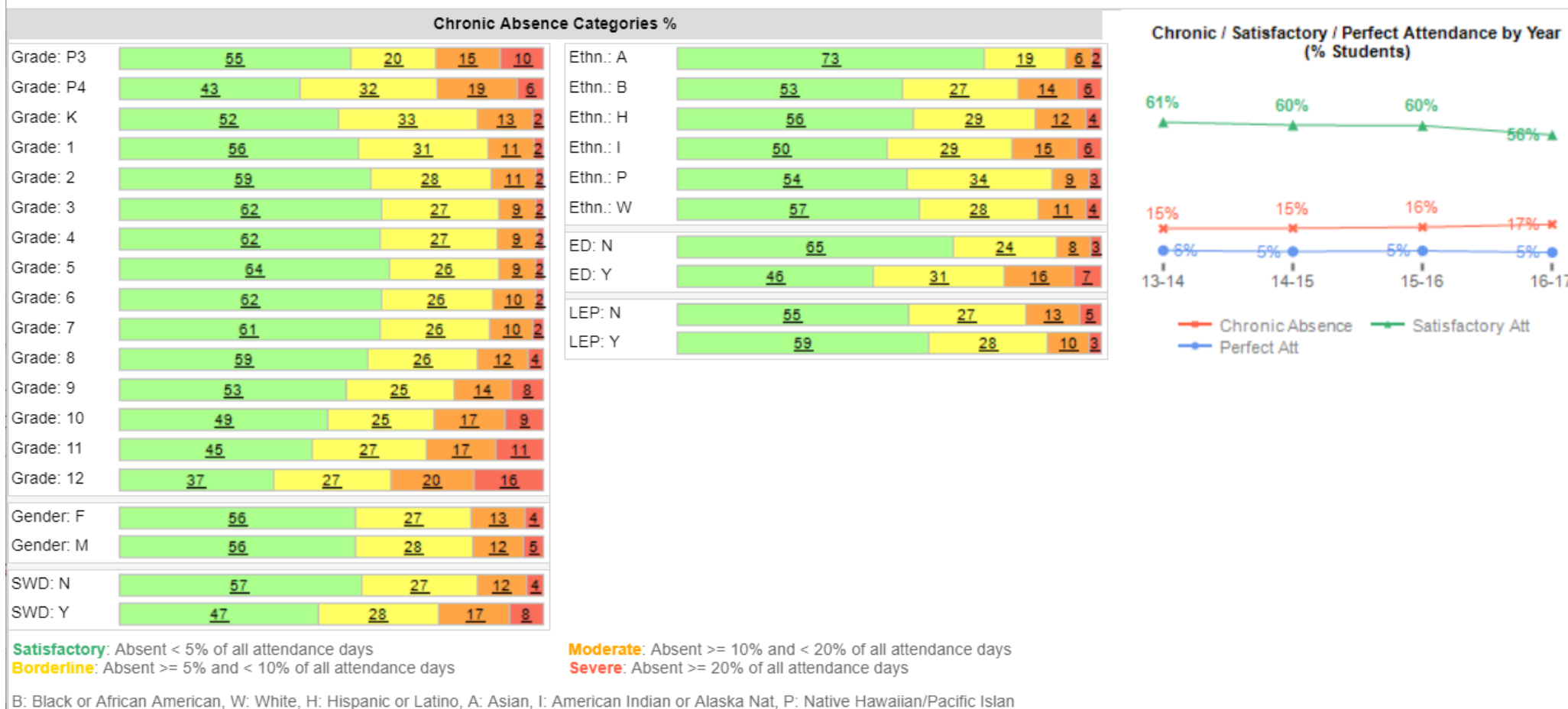
Chronic Absence	16-17		Chronic Absence Repeaters *		# Years Chronic	# Students
Grade Level	# Students	% of District	#	%		
P3	175	0 %	33	19 %	1	13,146
P4	728	1 %	46	6 %	2	5,432
K	1,102	1 %	249	23 %	3	2,928
1	941	1 %	442	47 %	4	1,671
2	871	1 %	396	45 %	5	1,028
3	791	1 %	334	42 %	6	618
4	783	1 %	318	41 %	7	389
5	704	1 %	282	40 %	8	207
6	782	1 %	332	42 %	9	127
7	762	1 %	342	45 %	10	62
8	906	1 %	422	47 %	Total	25,608
9	1,311	2 %	563	43 %		
10	1,458	2 %	703	48 %		
11	1,444	2 %	761	53 %		
12	1,804	2 %	992	55 %		
Total	14,562	17 %	6,215	43 %		

\* Students who are chronically absent in current and previous year.  
% of currently chronically absent students who are repeaters.



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## Nashville Public Schools Attendance Data Dashboards





# Take a Data Driven Systemic Approach: Capacity Building and Strategic Partnerships



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## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Think broadly about stakeholders
- State, district, city government/community, parents/students

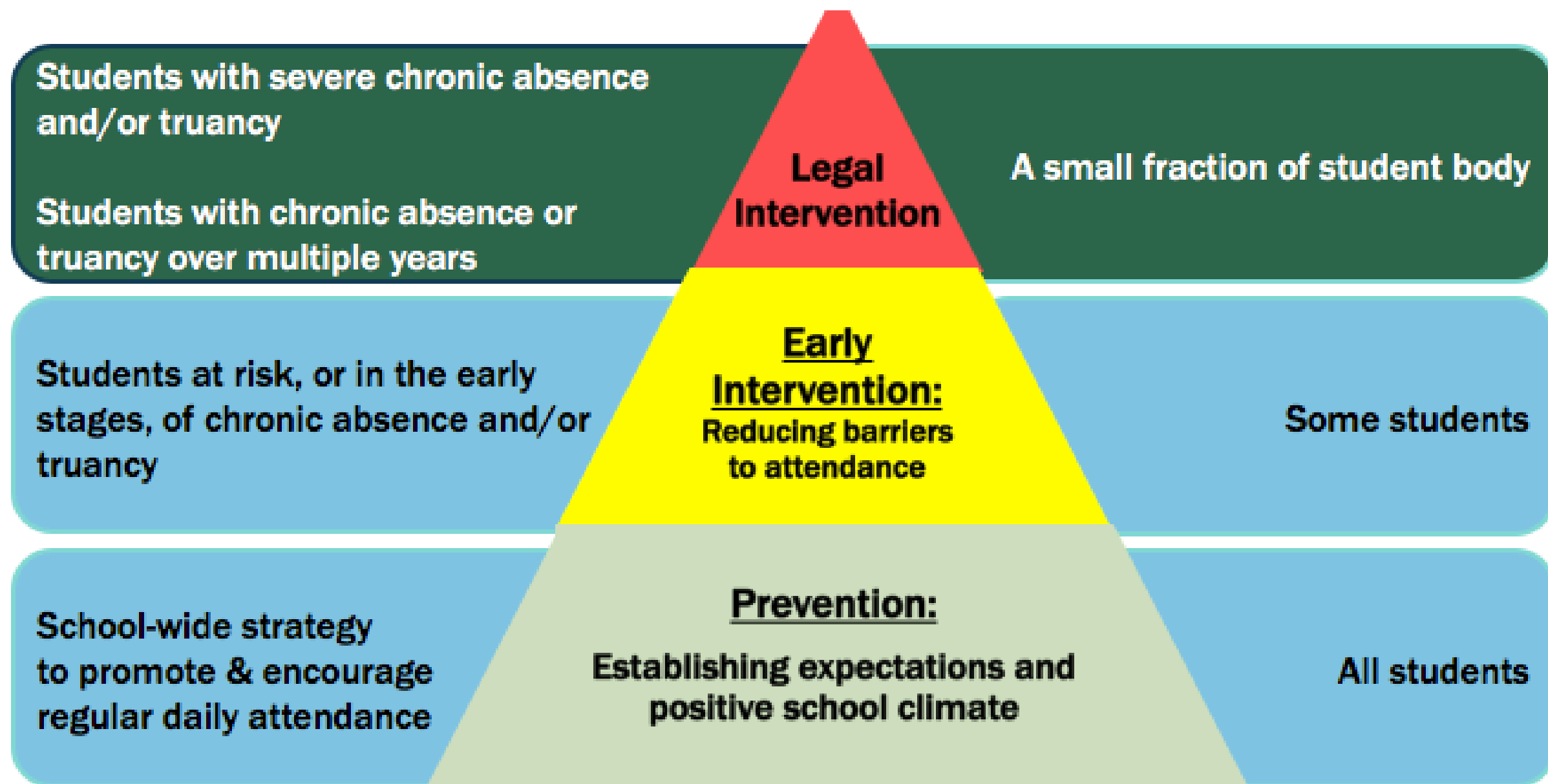
## ESTABLISHED APPROACHES AND METHODS

- Use existing structures and intervention models (multi-tiered)
- Attendance isn't a "separate problem", but rather a contributing factor

## COLLABORATIVE PROTOCOLS

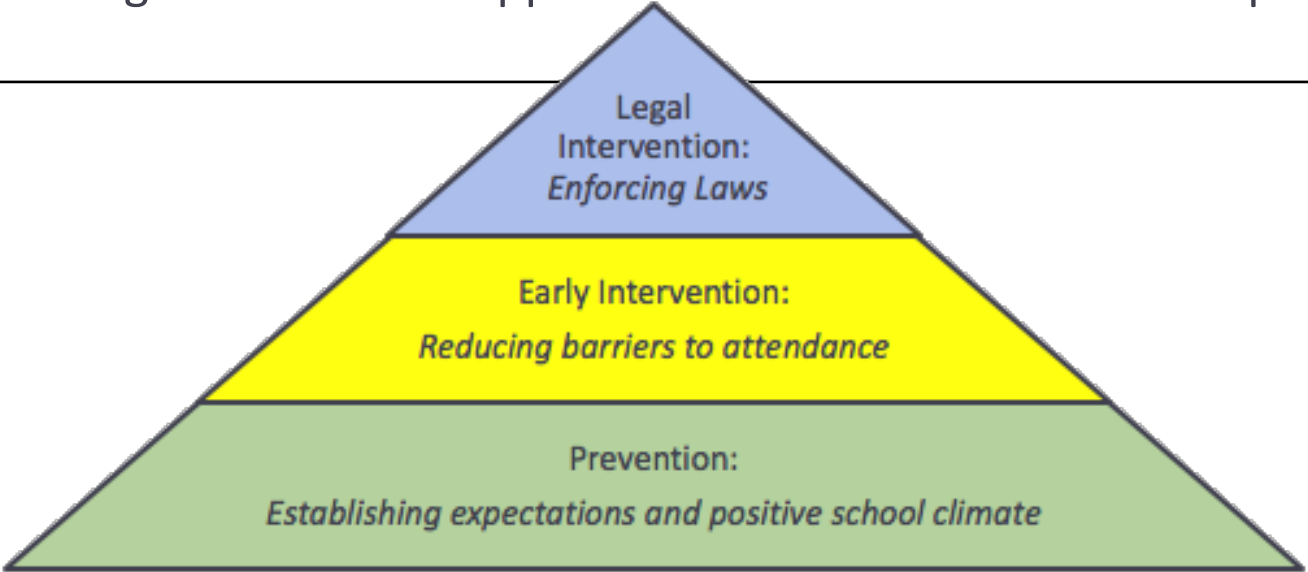
- Work together across departments and partners
- Intentionally make time and space to focus on understanding the problem and solutions

# Three Tier Approach to Attendance Intervention



# Tier I - Prevention

Strategy	Actions
Recognize Good and Improved Attendance	School communities can send a clear message that going to school every day is a priority by providing regular recognition and rewards to students and families who have good and improved attendance.
Engage Students and Parents	Attendance improves when a school community offers a warm and welcoming environment that engages students and families and offers enriching learning opportunities.
Monitor Attendance Data and Practice 1	<b>Data Analysis and Tools</b> The best way to identify students with poor attendance is to calculate the data that schools are already collecting. In addition to looking at school-wide averages, as most schools do, shift the data to see how many students are missing 10 percent of the school year.
Monitor Attendance Data and Practice 2	<b>Attendance Teams</b> Each school should have a team in place that meets regularly to review the school’s attendance data and coordinate efforts to reduce chronic absence.
Provide Personalized Early Outreach	Perhaps the most critical strategy is using data to trigger early caring outreach to families and students who are already missing too many days of school. Outreach is essential for identifying barriers to attendance — hunger, health, shelter, transportation or other challenges — and the supports or resources that would help improve attendance.



# Tier II - Early Intervention

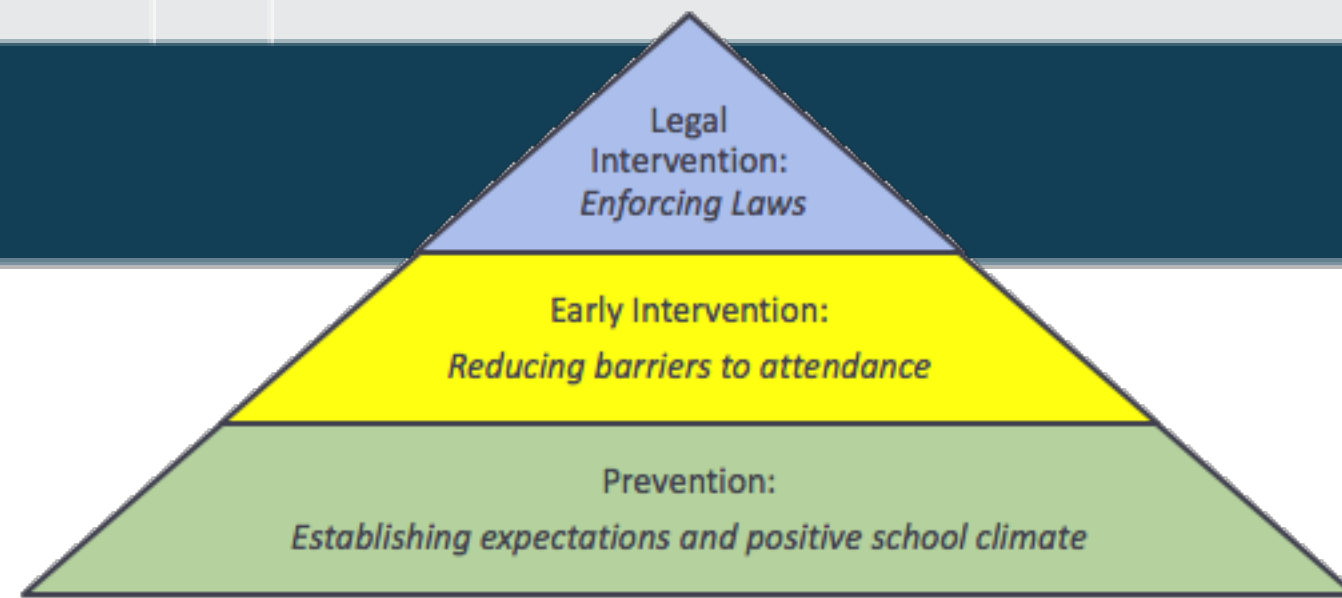
## Excessive Absence Screening Form

### III. Findings

Please indicate the risk factors contributing to the excessive absence of this student. Check all that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> Fear of a bully or of being teased	<input type="checkbox"/> Peer pressure (their friends are skipping school)
<input type="checkbox"/> Dislike/disinterest in school/lack of direction	<input type="checkbox"/> The feeling of being treated unfairly by school staff
<input type="checkbox"/> Academic frustration and failure	<input type="checkbox"/> Drug use/abuse
<input type="checkbox"/> The idea that they have better things to do	<input type="checkbox"/> Potential emotional or mental health problems
<input type="checkbox"/> Problems at home	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation issues
<input type="checkbox"/> Medical issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:

Additional Information (Optional):



# Collaborative Inquiry



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Collaborative Inquiry is a data-based team process that consciously uses the collaborative learning cycle (activating and engaging, exploring and discovering, and organizing and integrating) and the qualities of effective teams (fostering a culture of trust, maintaining a clear focus, taking collective responsibility and data-informed decision making).

Collaborative Inquiry Toolkit

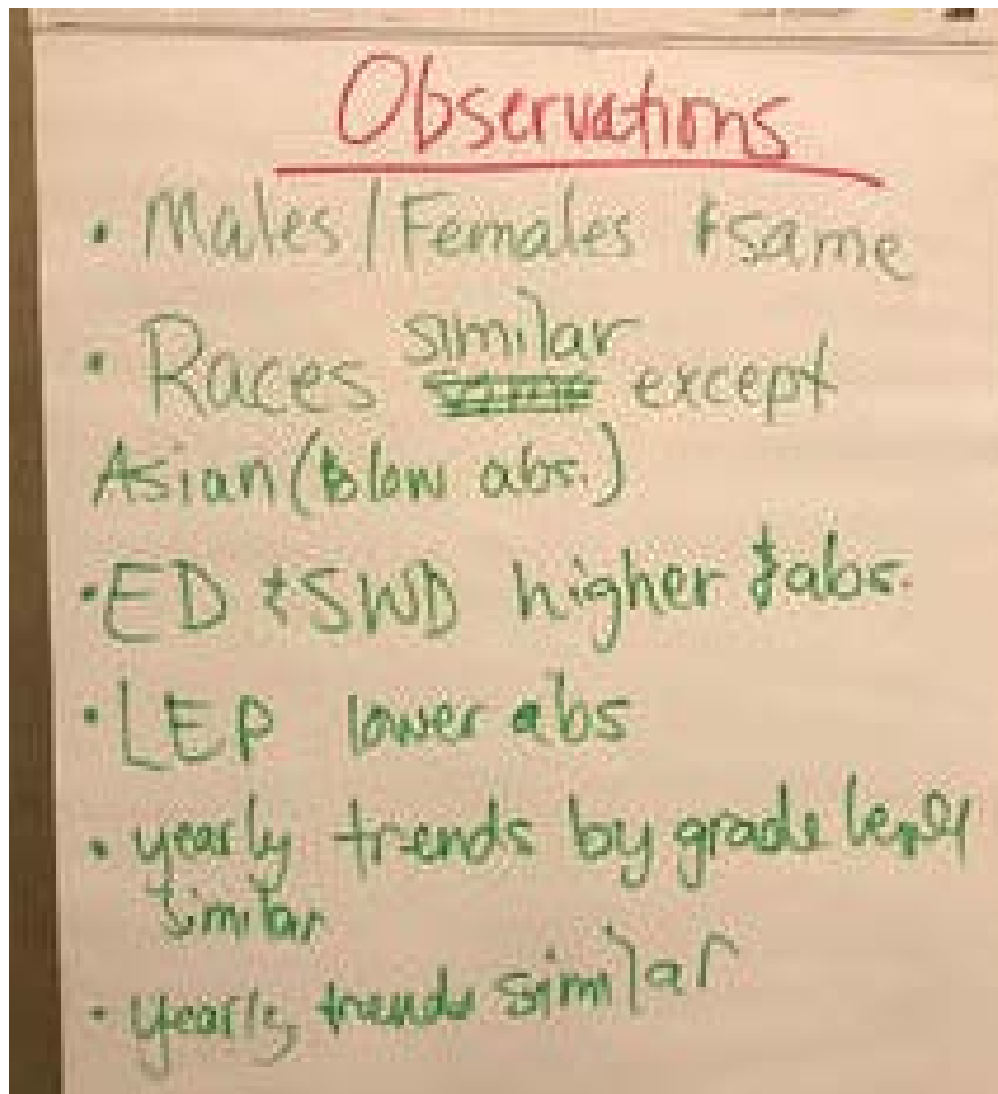
<http://www.mnpscollaboration.org/>





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## 1. Exploring and Discovering -- Observations



## 2. Organizing and Integrating -- Recommendations

Given the data observations, what might be some recommendations you have for improving attendance for MNPS students?

## 3. Reflection -- My Role

Given what we have discussed, what might be some actions you take or ideas you implement in your organization?



## **ALIGNED POLICY**

- ESSA
- State Report Card
- District Strategic Plan

## **STRUCTURE FOR MONITORING**

- Milestone Meetings
- Transparency/Reporting to Stakeholders

## **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT SUPPORTED**

- Productive feedback loops
- Opportunities to evaluate and improve
- Empowered to change

## **Take a Data Driven Systemic Approach: Shared Accountability**





## PROACTIVE APPROACH

- School climate
- Social Emotional Learning

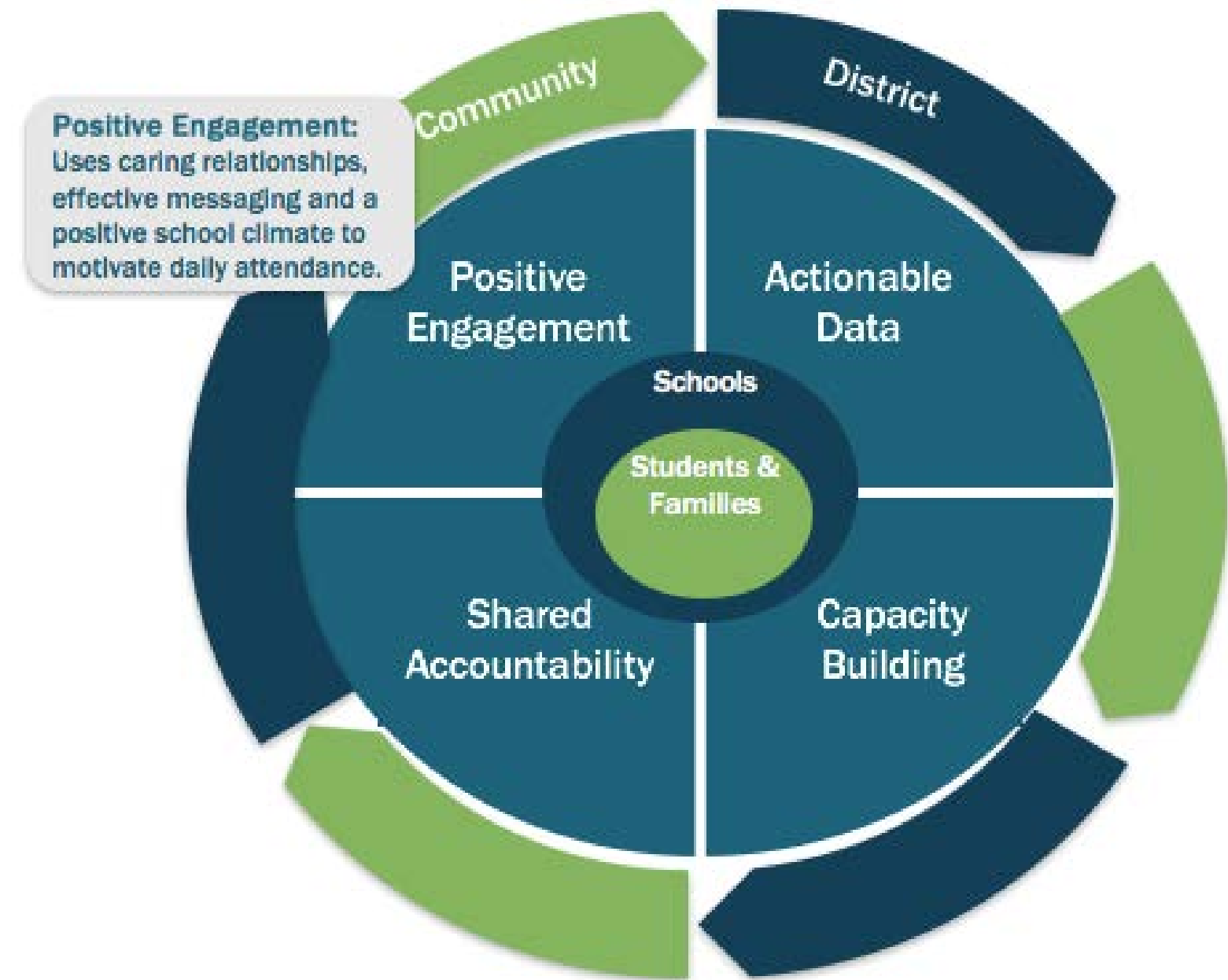
## OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS

- Doesn't require a degree in a specific field
- Potential component of all interaction

## POSITIVE IMPACT

- Improvement in many areas where students struggle (not just attendance)
- Benefits to everyone (not just the students)

## Take a Data Driven Systemic Approach: Positive Engagement



# Thank You!



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[ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/west](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/west)

The Regional Educational Laboratory West (REL West) at WestEd provides scientifically valid research findings that help meet the education needs in Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah.

Our staff draw from existing high-quality research, as well as conduct research and development projects and experimental studies. We also help stakeholders interpret evidence and build their own research capacity.

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